



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
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John J. Leahy
Mayor and Chairperson

Andre P. Descoteaux
Vice-Chairperson

Hilary Clark
Michael Dillon Jr.
Robert J. Hoey Jr.
Connie A. Martin

**Facilities Subcommittee Meeting Joint
with the Lowell Board of Health**

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Monday, November 2, 2020
Zoom – Virtual Meeting
5:30 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Mr. Hoey, Mr. Descoteaux and Mr. Dillon
School Committee Members Present:	Ms. Doherty and Ms. Martin
Board of Health Members:	Ms. Keegan RN, MSN, Dr. William Galvin, MD Ms. Golden RN, MSN, Ms. Cullen-Lutter, RN, CNM and Ms. Gendron, LSW
School Department Personnel Present:	Dr. Joel D. Boyd, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James P. Hall, Chief Operating Officer

This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. 30A, Section 20.

Chairperson Hoey called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

- **Discussion and consideration of establishing health metrics, thresholds, or other benchmarks for when schools can be returned back to 25%, or greater, in person learning.**

Mr. Hoey asked Ms. Keegan to address the Subcommittee. Ms. Keegan stated that presently we are setting a national record with more and more cases every day. The rates have risen 300% in the last two (2) months. She stated that case rates are not the only issue as we are also dealing

with infection rates and if its community or cluster spread. The City of Lowell is seeing community spread and not clustered because it is not being caused by jails or Universities. She stated that the numbers coming out of the Department of Health (DPH) are real and need to be trusted.

Superintendent Boyd thanked Ms. Keegan for her guidance and asked Dr. Hall to share the district's guiding principles. Dr. Hall stated that the three (3) guiding principles are as follows:

- Our decisions will be guided by the latest health data and input from public health experts. We will be monitoring the rate of positive cases here in Lowell and statewide.
- We will maximize options for families and will offer a remote learning option, as well as in-person option as long as health data continue to support physically being in our schools.
- We make a commitment to equity, with the belief that a public education is a fundamental civil right. Families and students who have historically been underserved have had a voice in the planning process and will have their needs met.

Superintendent Boyd stated that the district scaled back from 25% to 3% after receiving the recommendation from the Board of Health and he would like to bring back as many people from the 3% to 25% safely by using the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements as well as three (3) weeks of data.

Mr. Dillon stated that it's a difficult time with the private schools not having to adhere to the same rules that the Lowell Public Schools have to. He stated he believes that closing or going remote helps the cases go down in the city.

Ms. Keegan stated that closing the schools doesn't help and the infection rate is almost at 5%. She stated that what we need to do as a city is to get more testing and that testing doesn't cause the rates it helps the city with contact tracing. She stated that the Health Director is trying to get more testing to the city. She stated we need to increase testing and education. She stated that state wide the parochial schools and public schools are very similar in terms of infection rate.

Mr. Dillon asked what the end goal is projecting long term.

Ms. Keegan stated that the goal is 0% transmission and to get a vaccine. She stated that we need to keep looking at the numbers week by week to get the students back in school and right now we are going in the wrong direction.

Ms. Doherty stated that we are in a difficult position and we need to work together.

Mr. Hoey stated that the School Committee directed the Superintendent to keep everyone safe and he believes we are doing that.

Dr. Galvin stated that his is confused and conflicted about this as well and from a data perspective it needs to go down. He stated that shutting things down is done to slow it down.

Ms. Golden added that by slowing down the spread it helps the city not get back to where we were in the spring and it keeps the hospitals under control.

Ms. Cullen-Lutter stated that it's hard to find information that you can rely on and we are all in a difficult spot.

Mr. Hoey stated that he agrees with Mr. Dillon and doesn't believe all the numbers.

Dr. Galvin stated that the Board of Health gave the district the ok and did not dictate that it had to close and it's up to the Committee to decide what to do.

Mr. Hoey asked about whether DESE and DPH are offering rapid testing.

Ms. Boulanger, Health Director for the City of Lowell stated that yes and that it's a pilot program. She stated that it's not a PCR test that is given and it's not diagnostic and not really a fit for Lowell. She stated that you need a larger amount of children to participate.

Ms. Martin stated that if we are able to see a significant reduction for three (3) weeks the Committee could meet on the fourth (4) week and make a decision about students returning to school. She stated that she's hoping we are able continue with 3%.

Ms. Keegan stated that she thinks that's a reasonable framework.

Mr. Hoey made a motion to review the three (3) weeks of case rate data as well as consider the community wide spread to determine when a system should first go back to 25% or greater in-person learning, after consultation with the Health Department and/or Board of Health; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 3 yeas APPROVED

Superintendent Boyd stated that the district will be looking at all data available on a three (3) week trend in consultation with the Board of Health to make a determination about in-person learning.

Mr. Descoteaux stated that we need to listen to the numbers and that the numbers are not padded.

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to adjourn at 6:42 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,


Dr. James P. Hall, Chief Operating
Officer for Dr. Joel Boyd,
Superintendent and Secretary, Lowell
School Committee

JPH/mes